

Media Release

Paul Girrawah House

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ACTION TO STOP BLATANT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST THE NGAMBRI

"Today, I and other members of the Ngambri have commenced proceedings in the ACT Supreme Court under the *Human Rights Act 2004* (ACT) to stop the ACT Government from denying the existence of the Ngambri people and their connection to country" Paul Girrawah House, a proud Ngambri man, said.

"I am Paul Girrawah House, a proud Ngambri man. I was born here on Ngambri Country, at the old Canberra Hospital on Acton Peninsula."

"I firmly believe the ACT's overt 'one-tribe' policy of recognising only the Ngunnawal is contrary to s.27(2) of the ACT *Human Rights Act 2004*¹ and Articles 25, 31 and 33 of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*"² Paul House said.

Under the *Human Rights Act 2004* (ACT) and under Articles 25, 31 and 33 of the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*, Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage and traditional cultural expressions. They also have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions.

"For the past two years, my mother, Dr Matilda House and I, have been trying to meet with the ACT Government to have our identity and ancestry as Ngambri recognised by the ACT Government. Our attempts at reconciling with the ACT Government have come to no avail." Paul House said.

"We have irrefutable evidence of our ancestry and connection to Canberra and surrounding region that can be traced back to the time of first European settlement in the 1820s. But the ACT Government refuses to accept this evidence and consistently acknowledges only the Ngunnawal. The fact remains that the name Canberra is derived from the name of our people and country: The Ngambri."

"I and other members of the Ngambri have therefore commenced proceedings in the ACT Supreme Court under s.27(2) of the ACT *Human Rights Act 2004* to stop the ACT Government discriminating against the Ngambri." Paul House said.

"My Welcome to Country at the official opening of the 47th Parliament on Tuesday, 26 July, was made in a spirit of Peace and Harmony with all peoples of modern Australia."

"We believe it is time for the ACT Government to come to its senses in an atmosphere of mutual respect and recognise our Ancestors and our right to determine our identity."

We look forward to reaching amicable outcomes about our special place in the pre-and post-history of the Canberra region" Paul House said.

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¹ **Human Rights Act 2004 (ACT):**

s.27(2) states:

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right—

- (a) to maintain, control, protect and develop their—*
 - (i) cultural heritage and distinctive spiritual practices, observances, beliefs and teachings; and*
 - (ii) languages and knowledge; and*
 - (iii) kinship ties; and*
- (b) to have their material and economic relationships with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs recognised and valued.*

Note The primary source of the rights in s27(2) is the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 25 and Article 31.

² United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples:

Article 25:

Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship with their traditionally owned or otherwise occupied and used lands, territories, waters and coastal seas and other resources and to uphold their responsibilities to future generations in this regard.

ARTICLE 31:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions, as well as the manifestations of their sciences, technologies and cultures, etc.
2. In conjunction with indigenous peoples, States shall take effective measures to recognize and protect the exercise of these rights.

ARTICLE 33:

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine their own identity or membership in accordance with their customs and traditions. This does not impair the right of indigenous individuals to obtain citizenship of the States in which they live.
2. 2. Indigenous peoples have the right to determine the structures and to select the membership of their institutions in accordance with their own procedures.